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Congresswoman Matsui Discusses Her Opposition to Proposed Cuts to Medicare with Local Seniors

SACRAMENTO, CA – Today, Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA) addressed lunch attendees at the Fruitridge Community Center about recent budget proposals that affect seniors – and specifically the Republican budget plan that would privatize America’s Medicare program and severely cut funding for Medicaid. The Congresswoman, who is the Co-Chair of the Congressional Task Force on Seniors, discussed her opposition to the plan, and laid out what the plan would mean for Sacramento seniors. Over forty seniors were in attendance.

“It is essential that Sacramento seniors and their families are aware of the proposed cuts to Medicare and Medicaid contained in the Republicans’ latest budget plan,” said Congresswoman Matsui. “So many of us rely upon these programs in our everyday lives to help make ends meet, and it is imperative that we understand exactly how these cuts would affect our community.”

Like the Ryan budget proposed for Fiscal Year 2012, this year’s Republican budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2013 ends the Medicare guarantee of specific benefits at an affordable price. Instead, seniors in Medicare would receive a voucher, which they could use to buy a private insurance plan or traditional Medicare. However, the cost of the voucher would be capped, and each year, it would cover a smaller and smaller portion of the premium. Private insurers would be allowed to vary the benefits they provide, ending the certainty of guaranteed benefits and likely driving up the cost for those who stay on traditional Medicare. The plan also proposes raising the age of Medicare eligibility to 67.

Additionally, the plan caps and cuts federal Medicaid spending by \$810 billion over the next ten

years, putting the burden on the states and ensuring that funds will not keep pace with need. This cut would mean that seniors could lose access to critical long term care services, and that low-income children and people with disabilities would not be able to get the care they need. The Republican budget will also force Congress to fast-track legislation determining the future of Social Security, and force benefits cuts on the program as a result. Two-thirds of retirees rely on Social Security for the majority of their income. It also makes significant cuts to the Older Americans Act, which means that things like senior housing, fuel assistance, training for older workers, and Meals on Wheels programs are all at risk.

Matsui added, “Between ending the Medicare guarantee, capping and cutting Medicaid dollars, and repealing the Affordable Care Act, which has already saved our seniors billions of dollars, the Republican budget completely disregards the needs of America’s seniors – all while providing tax breaks for the wealthiest and Big Oil. This is simply unacceptable, and I will continue collaborating with my Democratic colleagues to move a budget that works for everyone – especially our seniors, our children, and our middle class.”

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